

# A Fellowship of Faith



When the Holy Spirit brings people to trust in Jesus, he also brings people together. At Faith Lutheran, we want to do everything we can to foster a strong sense of belonging as well as opportunities for service. In a Christian congregation, we walk together in our beliefs and we encourage each other both when times are good and when times are challenging.

Faith Groups bring together the members of our church family. They foster community so that Christians can help and support each other in their spiritual life.

# Faith Groups

Faith Groups are a vital part of our ministry at Faith. We want to be more than a friendly church. We want to be a church of friends. Faith Groups are where friendships are made or enhanced. This booklet lays out our approach to Faith Groups...

- what their purpose is
- what types of Faith Groups we want to offer
- how they are scheduled
- how you can plan to organize a Faith Group

If you have any additional questions about Faith Groups not covered in this booklet, please don't hesitate to contact the pastor.

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# What Are Faith Groups

God did not design us to face life on our own. Instead, he intended for believers to be woven together in a community so that they might encourage one another as together they walk the often-difficult path of life. Consider these words of direction from the Scripture, intended for all Christians:

- Be devoted to one another in love - Romans 12:10
- Encourage one another and build each other up - 1 Thessalonians 5:11
- Consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds - Hebrews 10:24
- Offer hospitality to one another - 1 Peter 4:9

Faith Groups are intended to bring the members of our church family together to do those very things. Their purpose is to knit Christians together in community that they might share each other's joys and burdens, help each other in time of need, and support each other in their spiritual life.

At Faith, our mission is "to proclaim the good news about Jesus to everyone we know and everyone we meet." We divide that mission into three areas: Connect, Growth, and Faith in Action. Faith Groups are not a mission in and of themselves. Rather they are a strategy for helping us carry out all three areas of our mission.

**Connect Groups:** Worship, Fellowship

**Growth Groups:** Children's Ministry, Youth Confirmation, Teen Bible Class, Adult Bible Class, Leadership Training

**Faith in Action Groups:** Evangelism, Community Engagement, Giving

# Three Types of Faith Groups

The main purpose of Faith Groups is to knit people together so that they might share their lives as God's Word directs them. This can happen in any number of different ways. In broad terms, we categorize Faith Groups according to the three areas of our ministry: to connect, to grow, and to put our faith into action.

## Connect Groups

Connect Groups are comprised of Christians who want to gather for some recreational fellowship. They understand that just as God rested from his labor (Genesis 2:2), so also people benefit from rest from time to time. We need to rest and recharge intellectually and emotionally, so that after that rest we might resume serving our God with vigor. Examples of Connect Groups: a group that gets together to play golf once a month; a group that discusses a book which the entire group has read; a group that shops, or talks, or goes out to eat, or just gets together; a group of moms and kids meeting at local parks; a group that likes to walk, ride bikes, go geocaching, or shoot at a shooting range; a group that likes to get together to play instruments and have a jam session.

## Growth Groups

Growth Groups are comprised of Christians who want to gather for the spiritual growth produced by Bible study and devotion. They take St. Peter's words to heart. "Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 3:18). These Bible studies differ from Sunday morning Bible study. They are more discussion oriented. Group members take portions of God's Word and apply them to their lives. There is no "teacher" in growth groups. There is a facilitator who keeps discussion moving and focused on the topic of the day. Growth Groups are the only of the three types of Faith Groups where the pastor assists with planning and preparation. If you would like to be a Growth Group leader, the pastor and will help you find appropriate and meaningful Bible study materials.

## Faith in Action Groups

Faith in Action Groups are comprised of Christians who want to serve either Faith or the community in some way. They understand that faith-driven service is evidence of the good

news about Jesus that they know and believe. Jesus said, “Let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven” (Matthew 5:16). Faith in Action Groups identify a way that they could serve the church in general, or serve specific people/groups within the church, or serve a segment of the community. Some examples of Faith in Action Groups: a group that meets at an assisted living center to socialize with the residents; a group of young people that meets at elderly or sick members’ homes to do yard work; a group that works at a local food pantry; a group that maintains the church’s buildings or grounds; a group of those who like to fix things and will help those of the congregation who need some light repair work at their homes; the choir or a smaller musical ensemble that serves the church in song.

# Planning a Faith Group

Each round of Faith Groups is preceded by four weeks of planning. For example, if you want to facilitate a Faith Group for March, your work begins in February. You start planning what type of group it is, who it's for, how often it meets, where it meets, etc. You put this information on a planning form, which you can find at [www.xxxxxxxxxxxxxxx](http://www.xxxxxxxxxxxxxxx). The information for your and all the other Faith Groups will be published, both in print and online. People will enroll by contacting you, the group facilitator. If you want to form a Faith Group, here are the things you need to consider before we can promote it:

*What type of Faith Group are you going to facilitate?*

If you want to plan a Connect or Faith in Action Group, you can plan that on your own. If it's a Growth Group, the pastor will help you locate good Bible study material and provide necessary training.

*How often is the Faith Group going to meet?*

Faith Groups run approximately 12 weeks. Faith Groups should meet a minimum of three times, i.e. monthly. They could meet as much as weekly. You will need to list every meeting date and time on the planning form.

*When is the Faith Group going to meet?*

Say you determine your Faith Group is going to meet six times throughout the period. You now need to pick when that will be. Evenings or mornings? Weekend or weekday? It is entirely up to you. It is advisable to keep the day of the week and time consistent.

*For how long will your Faith Group meet when it assembles?*

If it's a group that is meeting for game night which begins at 7 p.m. on Fridays, does that night end at 9 p.m. or midnight? People need to know what they are committing to.

*Where is the Faith Group going to meet?*

Faith Groups might meet at multiple locations. For example, a monthly golf group might meet at three different courses. But many groups, particularly Growth Groups, will meet in the same location each time. The ideal place for this is in your home. Studies of church small groups have consistently shown that if the goal of the group is to knit Christian's together in family, meeting in the facilitator's home is ideal. "Practice hospitality" (Romans 12:13).

Another possibility is to meet somewhere in the community. For example, a Growth Group of six meeting at a coffee shop for Bible study can give public testimony to the community of the importance of being in the Word. If meeting in-home or off-site is simply not feasible, it is possible to meet at church.

*For whom is the Faith Group intended?*

There is nothing wrong with creating Faith Groups for a certain demographic. Examples: a seniors' group that visits various historic sites, a women's group book club, a single's group. You should also decide on the maximum number of participants. Ideally, Faith groups shouldn't be more than 12 people.

*What are the costs (or potential costs) for those in the Faith Group?*

It is not wise for there to be surprise expenses for Faith Group participants. Thus, if participants need to purchase materials, please list those costs on the Faith Group planning form.

*What is your Faith Group called?* You need to come up with a name. The catchier, the better!

# FAQ

*I've never run a small group. How will I know what to do?*

We will provide you with brief training to help plan for a Faith Group. No matter what type of group you would run — Connect, Growth, or Faith in Action — it's not hard!

*Are Faith Groups just for Faith members, or may others attend?*

Of course non-members may attend! Our primary purpose is simply to knit people together into a true Christian family. But by all means, invite unchurched friends and family.

*Why don't Faith Groups run year-round?*

Why break them up into shorter time commitments? There are three compelling reasons to break groups up that are provided by most experts on running small groups in the church:

1. Without a definite begin date, people assume they are “jumping in the middle” of something, even if you tell them it's a week-by-week Bible study. People don't want to jump into the middle of something.
2. Without a definite end date, people assume they are supposed to continue in the group indefinitely. People tend to not commit to something that is open-ended.
3. If people stay in classes that go on indefinitely, they only get to know those who are in their group. If the primary purpose of Faith Groups is to knit together a body of believers, having individuals stay in a group with the same people indefinitely goes counter to that purpose. The same Faith Group may be scheduled every time we offer them, but it will be promoted as a new/separate group for the reasons listed above.

*What if I plan to facilitate a Faith Group and no one signs up?*

Small group experts will tell you that is likely to happen every time a church begins a small group series. At least one “fizzles.” Some thoughts on this. First of all, be careful how you define “no one.” If you have one person sign up, you have a group. Those same small group experts will tell you that meeting in a group of two or three is a very powerful way for Christians to grow together. Secondly, if zero sign up, realize it demonstrates either a lack of interest in your suggested topic or that your topic was of lower interest than the others promoted that period. It's not a lack of interest in you! Everyone who hosts a Faith Group will find out that, from time to time, one of their groups generates no interest. So give it a try! Don't be afraid.